

UTILITIES DIVISION[199]

Adopted and Filed

Pursuant to Iowa Code sections 17A.4, 476.1A, and 476.2, the Utilities Board (Board) gives notice that on October 12, 2011, the Board issued an order in Docket No. RMU-2011-0004, In re: Amendment to Outage Notification Requirements for Electric Utilities [199 IAC 20.19], “Order Adopting Amendment.” In the order, the Board adopted an amendment to the current outage notification rules for electric utilities that changes the notification requirement from two hours to six hours when an outage meets the other requirements in the rule. The Board also adopted a change to the operative language from “when it becomes apparent” to “when it is projected” to ensure that utility personnel understand that the Board should be notified as soon as utility personnel have sufficient information to project that an outage will last longer than six hours. The proposed amendment was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin at IAB Vol. XXXIV, No. 1 (7/13/11), p. 26, as **ARC 9614B**.

On June 22, 2011, the Board issued an order commencing a rule making in which the Board proposed to amend the outage notification as described above. In the June 22, 2011, order, the Board stated that the change from two hours to six hours should limit the outages that are required to be reported to those outages that are significant enough to warrant being forwarded to the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEMD) Duty Officer. The Board stated that the change in the operative language should provide electric utilities with a clearer understanding that outages should be reported as soon as utility personnel have sufficient information to project that the outage is likely to last longer than six hours.

Comments concerning the proposed amendment were received from MidAmerican Energy Company (MidAmerican), the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), and the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities (IAMU).

MidAmerican stated that it supports the change in the outage notification requirements.

IAEC stated that it supports the change from two to six hours. IAEC stated that it supports the change in the operative language and thinks the change makes it clear that utility personnel are to notify the Board as soon as a determination is made that the outage meets the requirements in the rule. IAEC pointed out that it is not always apparent at the outset of an outage how long the outage will last.

IAMU stated it supports the amendment.

No oral presentation was scheduled or requested for this rule making.

After a review of the comments, the Board determined that the amendment to the electric outage notification requirements should be adopted as proposed. As indicated in the order commencing the rule making, the current outage notification requirements have required utilities to notify the Board of outages that are not significant enough to report to HSEMD. When the Board adopted the current rule, the Board adopted a more conservative requirement than was set out in the Board’s internal procedures for reporting outages to HSEMD to ensure that the Board received notice of significant outages. The Board’s internal operating procedures require that the Board’s Duty Officer notify HSEMD only of outages that are projected to last at least seven to eight hours, unless there are other circumstances that warrant notice to HSEMD. Under the current two-hour notification requirement, the Board has been receiving many more notifications than it has been forwarding to HSEMD, and this has created confusion and a waste of Board and company resources. Experience with the two-hour standard has shown it is overly inclusive and should be changed.

Adoption of a six-hour outage notification requirement will greatly reduce the number of notifications that the Board receives that are not forwarded to HSEMD and will make the rule more consistent with the Board’s internal procedures. The change will allow companies to provide fewer notices to the Board and will allow those responding to outages that will last less than six hours to complete the restoration of service without stopping to provide notice to the Board.

The Board understands that there are concerns about the effect that outages of less than six hours may have on individual customers of a utility. The Board’s outage notification rule was not designed

to address many of these individual situations since the rule requires the Board to be notified only for outages that affect: (1) substantially all of a municipality, (2) 20 percent or more of a large utility's zone of service, (3) 25 percent of a small utility's customers, or (4) loss of service to significant public health and safety facilities. These requirements focus on those outages where HSEMD may be required to take some action and coordinate with local and other state emergency responders. The Board will therefore continue to receive notice of all significant outages.

The Board's order adopting this amendment to the outage notification rules is accessible through the Board's electronic filing system (EFS) at the EFS Web site at <http://efs.iowa.gov>.

After analysis and review of this rule making, no impact on jobs has been found.

This amendment is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 476.1A, 476.2 and 17A.4.

This amendment will become effective December 7, 2011.

The following amendment is adopted.

Amend subrule 20.19(1) as follows:

20.19(1) Notification. The notification requirements in subrules 20.19(1) and 20.19(2) are for the timely collection of electric outage information that may be useful to emergency management agencies in providing for the welfare of individual Iowa citizens. Each electric utility shall notify the board when it ~~becomes apparent~~ is projected that an outage may result in a loss of service for more than ~~two~~ six hours and the outage meets one of the following criteria:

a. For all utilities, loss of service for more than ~~two~~ six hours to substantially all of a municipality, including the surrounding area served by the same utility. A utility may use loss of service to 75 percent or more of customers within a municipality, including the surrounding area served by the utility, to meet this criterion;

b. For utilities with 50,000 or more customers, loss of service for more than ~~two~~ six hours to 20 percent of the customers in a utility's established zone or loss of service to more than 5,000 customers in a metropolitan area, whichever is less;

c. For utilities with more than 4,000 customers and fewer than 50,000 customers, loss of service for more than ~~two~~ six hours to 25 percent or more of the utility's customers;

d. No change.

e. Any other outage considered significant by the electric utility. This includes loss of service for more than ~~two~~ six hours to significant public health and safety facilities known to the utility at the time of the notification, even when the outage does not meet the criteria in paragraphs 20.19(1) "a" through "d."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For replacement pages for IAC, see IAC Supplement 11/2/11.